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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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Agenda item 6

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Letter dated 19 August 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires, a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the forty-eighth session of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

GE.96-13526 (E)

Situation of Yugoslav national minorities in the Republic of Albania and Albania's support of separatism in Kosovo and Metohija

The new Government of the Republic of Albania, set up in the aftermath of the recently held elections characterized by massive irregularities and by non-democratic steps taken by the authorities, severely denounced by the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and many influential members of the international community, is further pursuing its greater Albania policy of encouraging ethnic Albanian separatism and of interfering in the internal affairs of its neighbours. Thus, the Albanian Government considers the "Albanian national question" as its foreign policy priority, while failing to inform of its own intentions concerning the respect for the rights of national minorities in that country, even though it is bound to do so as a member of the Council of Europe, as well as under the United Nations and OSCE documents.

On several occasions, some European institutions have denounced the Republic of Albania for not honouring the rights of national minorities. Within United Nations forums, it is well known that Albania does not recognize the rights of over 50,000 members of Yugoslav minorities - ethnic Serbs, Montenegrins and Gorans - of Orthodox or Muslim confession. The national minority status of these minorities is not being recognized, they are not entitled to official use of their mother tongue, they have no education, no schools, no media, no cultural institutions of their own, nor are religious services being rendered in their mother tongue. As for the Serb-Montenegrin cultural and historical heritage, as well as their sacral sites (churches and cemeteries), they were demolished long ago.

Aiming at their assimilation, the Albanian authorities have tried to expropriate their property and to expel them from their ancestral homes in the villages of Mali and Veliki Boric, the district of Skutari. They have exerted pressure by intimidating the leaders of the "Moraca-Rozafa" Serb-Montenegrin Association by planting explosive devices in front of their homes, thus preventing the members of this Association taking part in the cultural and folklore manifestations held in their mother country - the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At the same time, without any reason, the members of these minorities have been exposed to police interrogation.

The latest example of the Albanian authorities' repression is their forcing many ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins in the district of Skutari and in other parts of the country to retake Albanized personal and family names.

Under the Albanian "Law on Amending and Changing of some Laws", No. 7682, of 9 March 1993, Albanian citizens have been entitled to apply for retaking their original names, forcibly Albanized during the dictatorship. For example, in the Vraka settlement alone, some 560 out of the 1,200 ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins have retaken their original Serb names. In spite of this, the State secretary for local government has suspended this law in practice by prohibiting the local authorities to issue passports to ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins carrying their original personal and family names.

This attempt to de-nationalize the Serb and Montenegrin minorities is a drastic case of human rights violation. Thus, while declaring itself a

democratic State, Albania offers yet another example of jeopardizing the national identity of ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins, flagrantly ignoring all relevant international documents, as well as the United Nations and OSCE principles.

Assisted by influential international factors, the new Albanian Government is intensifying its efforts to put the issue of Kosovo and Metohija on the agenda of international forums. Its intention is to prevent the international community from getting an insight into the undemocratic practices and the flagrant violation of human rights and rights of national minorities exercised in Albania itself.

On the international scene, Albania is coordinating its activities with the separatist leaders of Kosovo and Metohija, advocating its independence, i.e. its secession as a "just solution", even though Kosovo and Metohija is an integral part of the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Moreover, some countries and individuals maintain contacts with separatist leaders of Kosovo and Metohija, thus nurturing their secessionist aspirations.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia would appreciate the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities offering protection to the members of the Yugoslav minorities in the Republic of Albania and obliging it to consistently honour in practice the rights of minorities, in compliance with the United Nations and the OSCE principles.

(Signed) Miroslav Milosevic
Chargé d'affaires a.i.